



Congresswoman Stephanie Murphy
Floor Statement in Support of her Amendment to H.R. 2824, the *Increasing Opportunity and
Success for Children and Parents Through Evidence-Based Home Visiting Act*
September 26, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

I rise in support of my bipartisan amendment, which is cosponsored by Congresswoman Jennifer González-Colón of Puerto Rico and Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez of New York. The American citizens in Puerto Rico and the neighboring U.S. Virgin Islands are enduring an incredibly difficult situation in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria.

As a Member whose central Florida district is home to over 100,000 individuals of Puerto Rican heritage, I join my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have made crystal clear to our brothers and sisters in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands that they will receive all the federal support they need to stabilize the situation in the short term, to rebuild in the medium term, and to emerge stronger in the long term. We are part of one American family and, like any close-knit family, we always have each other's backs, especially when times are tough.

My amendment will ensure that Puerto Rico and the other U.S. territories are treated equally under the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program, which the underlying bill

reauthorizes. The amendment will implement a recommendation made by the bipartisan, bicameral Congressional Task Force on Economic Growth in Puerto Rico.

This federal program provides annual grants to states and territories to fund home visiting services for families with young children. Visits are conducted by social workers and other professionals. They provide parenting education and other support services, with the goal of helping at-risk families succeed. It is a great program that invests in children and families, helps lift them out of poverty, and increases the chance that they will become productive and successful members of society.

In theory, the program treats states and territories equally when it comes to the distribution of grant funding. In practice, however, Puerto Rico is treated unfairly. The Department of Health and Human Services makes allocations based, in part, on a U.S. Census Bureau data product on childhood poverty. But that data does not include information on Puerto Rico or the other territories. Therefore, Puerto Rico always receives the minimum grant allowed by law, even though the island of 3.4 million has a high rate of childhood poverty.

My amendment would simply require HHS, when making grants, to use the best federal data available for every state and territory, and to use an appropriate alternative data source if necessary in the case of Puerto Rico. This will ensure that Puerto Rico receives its fair share of funding, not one penny more and not one penny less.

I hope my colleagues will support this amendment, and that we will continue to do everything possible to help our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico.